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Executive Registry
65-4606

9 AUG 1965

MEMORANDUM FOR THE RECORD

SUBJECT: Lansdale Mission to Vietnam

PARTICIPANTS: State: Mr. Unger, General Lansdale, Mr. Rostow, Mr. Yager, Mr. Jorden, Mr. Bohanan, Mr. Dunn
White House: Mr. Cooper
AID: Mr. Stoneman, Mr. Mazzocco
USIA: Mr. Moore, Mr. Zorthian
ISA: Mr. Eilsberg
CIA: Mr. Colby

1. The meeting was called to consult with General Lansdale on his mission to Vietnam. Mr. Unger led off with a letter he wrote to Secretary McNamara pointing out the need for efforts on the political side in Vietnam, both as a part of the current struggle and to prevent the fruits of our military actions being lost to a Communist political victory. He welcomed General Lansdale within this framework and provided the attached description of General Lansdale's assignment. He suggested that the participants at the meeting might be a continuing group to insure Washington support of General Lansdale's efforts.

2. General Lansdale then described his concept of his mission. He emphasized that he and his team will primarily try to determine what the Vietnamese think, what they want, and what they will do. He believed that ideas for action have been myriad but that the key must be in what the Vietnamese leaders and people themselves really want. He felt they must be assisted in developing a clear goal for their efforts so that they can mobilize their energies in this direction. He felt his own mission to be one of trying to unify the various efforts taking place throughout the American mission along these lines. He emphasized that he would not interfere with continuing "empires" and responsibilities but would rather put major emphasis on developing the Vietnamese side of the equation. He emphasized

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that he believed the hour to be extremely late and that this work is highly necessary. He said that he could work quietly and not cause a furor but that he would not plan to work clandestinely, leaving that to the people properly charged with it.

3. Mr. Rostow commented that despite the critical nature of the current situation, he felt that the process of growth of new Vietnamese leadership might even be accelerated and that he thus found some hope for the success of Lansdale's program. He recalled his 1961 conversation with Diem in which he told Diem he had to be a transitional phase to the growth of a new generation of leadership and his heavy heart at Diem's reply that these people talk well but could not produce. He said that the Lansdale effort was an example of the United States Government determining a new form for its foreign aid efforts. He said it took 10 years to work out a system to handle economic development and that we are now in the process of determining techniques not only to aid but also actively to search out institutions which need support and assistance in order to develop and make their contribution to the building of modern free societies. He commented that CIA has been a leader in this searching out process but it needs to be done on a broader basis.

4. This led to a series of comments by various participants on various points:

a. General Lansdale suggested that he may wish to see if something can be done to encourage more Vietnamese to seek advanced education in the U. S. as distinct from France, and to improve their reception and handling here.

b. General Lansdale also said that he may wish to try to develop some training for Vietnamese in the mechanics of elections and other political activities, although not in the context of public administration training.

c. General Lansdale described his 1954 experience of activating a refugee program, developing Vietnamese leadership and AID support. It was the general consensus that the current refugee program may offer a useful basis for this type of effort.

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d. Mr. Cooper suggested the need for planning away from Saigon, e.g. in Washington, for the non-military problem during and after negotiations in order that they not cause a collapse in Saigon. There was some doubt that this could or should be done away from Saigon. Mr. Rostow commented that General Lansdale might try to get the message over that a cease fire might offer more opportunity on our side than danger as it would suspend the armed power of the Viet Cong.

e. General Lansdale suggested trying to use Communist capabilities and habits against them, as with the judo they practice on us, citing as an example the development of world-wide publicity indicating popular revulsion for the Viet Cong, which would be apt to cause the Communists to launch a major review of their positions and approaches.

f. Mr. Colby suggested that Lansdale might well supplement his efforts in the political circles in Saigon by active attention to outlying sources of local strength and local leadership, with full realization of the delicacy of developing such centers without creating a danger of warlordism.

g. Mr. Colby also suggested a longer term view of some of these institution building efforts, even though they might cause temporary discomfort, citing our problems in getting anything started with the Buddhists over the past 8 months.

h. Mr. Zorthian commented on the necessity that the operating agencies feel a sense of participation in the planning and programming of Lansdale's efforts and not merely be asked to execute them. Mr. Rostow suggested for this purpose that Lansdale have a good liaison officer who would take particular pains to keep other agencies and Washington advised of General Lansdale's efforts and thinking. General Lansdale said he had an individual in mind for this purpose(later identified as Mr. Joseph Baker).

i. Mr. Zorthian commented that one of Lansdale's major problems would be to sell the American mission as a whole on the importance of the political field as there was a tendency for it to work on other matters and give only lip service to this field.

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This comment met general agreement. Mr. Rostow suggested that each agency through its own channels should advise its mission in Saigon of the importance with which this program is viewed by the highest levels of the government and of every agency. Mr. Unger said a NSAM may be coming out on this matter.

5. The meeting ended with assurances of support of General Lansdale's effort, which he said could best be exemplified by the provision of the people he had requested for his team.

6. There was also a warning that the press handling of Lansdale's arrival would be complicated. Mr. Rostow stated it may have roughly the effect of landing an armored division. This will be subject of further consultation and consideration.

7. After the meeting I discussed with General Lansdale and Mr. Stoneman Lansdale's request for funds, suggesting that the matter would best be handled by AID rather than ourselves, along the lines of Rufus Phillips experience (attached), in order to avoid any suggestion that Lansdale was really working for CIA. We were interrupted before we could complete this discussion. (ACTION: CFE).

/s/ William E. Colby

William E. Colby
Chief, Far East Division

Attachments:
as stated above

cc: DDCI

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CONFIDENTIAL

Mr. William Colby: August 6, 1965

The attached memorandum is provided to give you in brief summary the mission of the Lansdale group which will be set up in the U.S. Mission in Saigon shortly after Ambassador Lodge's arrival there. While some press speculation is perhaps inevitable it is hoped that the Lansdale group will be able to undertake their work in Saigon with a minimum of publicity and close press attention and therefore it will be helpful if speculative discussion here is not stimulated.

The attached memorandum has Ambassador Lodge's approval.

Attachment:

Memorandum

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CONFIDENTIAL

August 6, 1965

MEMORANDUM

Subject: Mission of Lansdale Group

A hand-picked group of about 10 experienced counter-subversion/terrorism workers under the direction of Edward G. Lansdale will go to Saigon to provide Ambassador Lodge with a special operating staff in the field of political action both at a central government level and also in connection with rural programs. As stated by Secretary Rusk in his news conference on August 2nd this group will be concerned with the broad problem of the "peaceful construction of a viable society" in Viet Nam through political action and making full use of such programs as rural reconstruction.

Mr. Lansdale will be designated an assistant to Ambassador Lodge. The members of his group will work under his sole direction and will be listed on the U.S. Mission roster under the agencies from which they have been temporarily detached.

As Secretary Rusk has also noted, Ambassador Lodge will wish to talk over this program with the GVN before any details of the program are announced. Meanwhile if there are questions from the press once Mr. Lansdale's designation is known, it will be stated that he will be serving as an assistant to the Ambassador for the coordination of U.S. participation in social reconstruction.

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